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The Silent Stalking of Japan: Submarine Diary

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and ended in 1945. As the author notes, the F4F "represented as important an advancement in technology as the transition to jet propulsion ten years later." Another valid lesson that is well documented by the author is the importance of developing tactics suitable to the weapon in hand. The F4F's principle adversary was the A6M "Zero" fighter, which was faster, had a longer range, and could out-climb and out-turn it. In addition, most historians would agree that the Japanese pilots at the start of the war were as good as any in the world and more experienced than U.S. pilots.

Tillman skillfully chronicles the evolution of tactics, by masters like Jimmy Thatch, which enabled the Wildcat to overcome these disadvantages and achieve an impressive overall kill ratio of better than two to one. Ironically, the additional weight of the modifications (self-sealing fuel tanks, armor, and additional guns), which detracted from the F4F's performance also contributed to its enviable ability to absorb punishment and still return the pilot home—the genesis of Grumman's "Iron Works" reputation.

Many American readers are aware that the Wildcat served in the British Royal Navy, but Tillman brings to light the enviable operational record of the British Wildcats and Marlets (an earlier British name for their F4F's), which served the Royal Navy from the Battle of the Atlantic through the Mediterranean and Northern European theaters and into the Indian Ocean.

This second edition contains excellent photographs of various Wildcat variants in U.S. and British service, and extensive appendices. Despite the minor, but annoying, inclusion of Army P-39 and P-40 fighters in the chapter "Other American Naval Aircraft" (the *only* errors I discovered in the book), these appendices will be particularly useful to those unfamiliar with the World War II aircraft and squadron names and designations, and also provide a list of Wildcat "aces."

This work is a skillful mixture of personal accounts and official histories. Aviation historian Barrett Tillman conducted extensive interviews with the "who's who" of former F4F pilots to produce this informative and entertaining book, which belongs on any aviation library's bookshelf.

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Mendenhall, Corwin. *The Silent Stalking of Japan: Submarine Diary*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 1991. 290pp. \$19.95

This is an excellent examination of the submarine campaign against Japan during World War II, through what appears to be contemporaneously documented observations of the author's eleven war patrols on two submarines. The urgency of the time is emphasized by the fact that Mendenhall made his first war patrol as an unqualified ensign and his last as a

lieutenant commander, executive officer, and a prospective commanding officer.

However, the real reason why students of modern warfare should give this work more than a superficial glance is its insight into how the perceived capabilities of maritime stealth rose to approach the intrinsic capabilities of the platform and its technology, and how doctrine, tactics, and procedures evolved to provide a better "impedance match" with the weapon system.

For example, in 1942 submarine commanding officers would not operate on station in waters less than one hundred fathoms (600 feet) deep to avoid detection by aircraft. They remained submerged at seventy-five percent of test depth with bare steerageway from an hour before sunrise to an hour after sunset. The presence of a single aircraft or escort ship would suffice to abort an attack, and island anchorage entrances were "blockaded" by patrolling as much as forty miles to seaward. The tactical nature of the submarine was stressed by a first-priority emphasis on warships as targets. By 1945, offensive operations were conducted in as little as fifteen fathoms, and daylight surfaced operations were commonplace—boats submerging only for attack or for brief periods of thirty minutes or so if an aircraft seemed to be approaching them. (Entries read "the Skipper noted through the periscope that the nearest destroyer was passing about seventy-five yards to starboard," as a protective screen was

penetrated to attack a shipping convoy. Even bays and rivers were not immune to intrusion and inspection by target-hungry subs, and it had become apparent that the proper target set of the the submarine force was *strategic* in nature—warships were second priority to tankers and cargo ships.

The serious student will be interested in the mental exercises stimulated by *Submarine Diary*:

- What errors of fleet exercises, simulation, or gaming in the 1920s and 1930s led the Navy to advise submariners that it was suicidal to operate within four hundred miles of an enemy airbase, and that any daylight attack must be made from great depths using only sonar bearings?

- Are we again mistakenly assuming the attack submarine's mission set in the post-Soviet era to be tactical in nature and missing the *strategic* contribution provided by the early arrival on any littoral scene, anywhere in the world, of a survivable and ubiquitous weapon system with a broad spectrum of capabilities effective against valued assets both ashore and afloat?

- Do all the historical and contemporaneous under-estimations of the impact of maritime stealth have relevance to other forms of emergent stealth platforms such as the F-117, B-2, and ATF?

There are those who may take offense to Rear Admiral Mendenhall's blunt criticism of some senior officers' actions, decisions, and personal traits. In the author's defense, however, the great majority of his adverse comments

occur at the point in the text where he is an experienced executive officer and a prospective commanding officer. It would be a mediocre, poorly trained, and less than confident executive officer who did not question even the best of the commanding officers. No other alternative is acceptable. The system is designed to work that way.

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Kahn, David. *Seizing the Enigma: The Race to Break the German U-Boat Codes, 1939-1943*. New York, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin, 1991. 336pp. \$22.95

In 1974 the historical community first learned of the group of dedicated scientists in World War II who had deciphered German Enigma communications under the Allied project known as Ultra. Prior histories of the war made no mention of Ultra or its significant contribution to the Allied victory. Unlike other authors who have attempted to evaluate the entire project, David Kahn has chosen to examine only one aspect of it—breaking the U-boat Enigma codes. This work describes how the men and women assigned to that task succeeded, and how their efforts effected the outcome of the war.

Kahn has done an admirable job of presenting the codebreakers' stories through a series of well documented events masterfully connected to create a dramatic tale that is enjoyable to read.

He has also provided an excellent

analysis of the value of Ultra intelligence not only in the Battle of the Atlantic but the entire war.

This work chronicles the events surrounding the development of the Enigma machine in the 1920s, how the Polish and French contributions helped to solve its mysteries in the 1930s, and the British acquisition of a working model in 1939. Kahn presents in detail the progress of the British codebreaking effort between 1939 and 1943, against the larger backdrop of the Battle of the Atlantic. North Atlantic convoys supplied the British war effort, and the German *Kriegsmarine* strategy was to guide the U-boat wolfpacks by radio communication to intercept them. It was therefore extremely important that the German communications be deciphered.

This history discusses the experiences of a few key personalities in fascinating detail, covering their codebreaking techniques and their dependence on captured documents, insightful guesses, and in many instances on mistakes made by the enemy. In addition the author has provided the German perspective of crucial events, which offers the reader viewpoints of both sides.

Kahn offers a convincing estimate of the possible extension of the war had the German Enigma codes not been deciphered, and how other factors such as the atomic bomb might have influenced events. He also provides an interesting discussion of why the Allies were more successful in codebreaking than the Germans, and